Castlemaine Naturalist

November 2018

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Monthly newsletter of the Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Gang-Gang Cockatoo at Anglesea
- photo by Joy Weatherill

2018 Annual Challenge Bird Count

Helpers sought for Castlemaine area

By Chris Timewell

The Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club has entered a 'team' in the Annual Bird Count Challenge (ABCC) for approximately 20 years. The ABCC involves teams from across Australia documenting as many bird species and individuals as possible within a calendar day within their region. Searches can occur up to a distance of 25km from a central point. Castlemaine's central point is the Market Building on Mostyn St, which means that we cover the areas in and around Maldon, Harcourt, Mt Alexander, Guildford, Taradale, Metcalfe, Muckleford and Newstead to name a few. Searches can be undertaken in parks, reserves, gardens, wetlands, dams, in private land (with landholder's permission), as you're driving between sites or just by looking up into the sky above!

Usually Castlemaine's team comprises five or more groups of at least three people each looking for birds within designated areas. However, there is no maximum number – the more, the merrier. For a bird to be included in the count, it must be accurately identified after being either heard by at least three people or seen by at least two people within the group. In 2017, we managed to detect 107 different species and 1723 individual birds.

Castlemaine will be entering another team in this year's challenge count, which is being held on the weekend of 1 & 2 December 2018. Bird enthusiasts of all skills levels are welcomed and encouraged. It's a fun day, and a good opportunity for beginners to learn from more experienced birdwatchers – while also contributing to our knowledge of the distribution of birds in the local area. Various groups, and group members, spend anything from an hour or so up to the full day undertaking surveys.

I would love to hear from you if you'd like to join an existing group, and perhaps to form a group of your own with friends and family. Please let me know as soon as possible (c_timewell@hotmail.com or call 0417-621-901), so we can make sure that as many locations as possible are covered, and that double-ups are avoided. I can also provide you with the paperwork and instructions.

November Observations (1948)

George Broadway

In the "Wildlife" issue of November 1948 there were very few specimens for identification. Were people not out and about in October, or were they perhaps too busy looking for wildflowers? Who knows? Anyway these are what was sent.

Stoneville (WA) The Blue Wren at the window was seeing his reflection and trying to frighten away the "other bird" which he saw there. The only way to stop this is to cover the window with a blind or curtain on the outside.

(I had a problem with a Blue Wren attacking itself in the external rear vision mirror of my wagon and making a mess on the door. I had to throw a cloth over the mirror to stop it)

Officer: Your insects were Leafhoppers, the same as shown on page 514

Mulgrave (NSW) The bars under the tail suggest one of the cuckoos, the size suggests it could be a Pallid Cuckoo but the call differs from your description.

The nest was not a Frogmouth's but I cannot suggest what it might have been. A fuller description would have helped.

Peterborough (SA): Was the spider's nest a hole in the ground or a mass of web? There are many kinds of spider that would have remains of beetles around their nest, so your description does not help.

Mt Hawthorn (WA): The handy-man was not "just kidding". Cats train their kittens to catch mice by releasing them for the kittens to pounce on.

Camperdown: Some kinds of tree will live with only very few of the roots left in the ground; but the part that has not blown out usually produces more roots rapidly underground to replace those that were broken.

Womerah: Your little bird nesting in a burrow in the ground was probably the Spotted Pardalote or Diamond Bird. That is the normal place for it to nest.

Camberwell: It is unusual for a snail to go for a walk without putting his (its) head right out of the shell but it can be done. Probably it had just touched something it didn't like and that made it pull its head in. *(One can't very well describe a snail as being male or female when it is hermaphrodite, therefore I have altered "him" to "it")*

Maneroo (WA): The small birds were probably Thornbills while the larger ones may have been Treecreepers.

Burramine: When Eucalypts are very young they are great absorbers of water – so much so that they are used in various parts of the world to drain marshy land. This would explain why the ground is always harder and drier under your gum trees than under the Peppercorn trees, and also explains the difference between the humus formed by the gum leaves and the humus under the vines, and the absence of earthworms from the ground beneath the gum trees.

There were also some specimens sent in for interest, not for identification.

Lorne: Ghost moth pupae showing backwardly directed spikes on the hinder half. As the insect wriggles in the burrow the spikes catch on the sides preventing any backslip. The hard spikes on the head are used for breaking through the soft wood pulp plug which the larva makes just before pupating.

2. Bone 2 photos to show a contrast in bone structure. The breastbone of an emu with portion of the paper-thin outer layer shaved away to show the spongy nature of the interior, which is lighter, bulk for bulk than cork.
3. Hoppers. Frequently found in groups of half a dozen or more feeding on eucalypt foliage, these steely blue-black cicada-like insects are known as "Leaf-hoppers" The scientific name is *Eurymela distincta.* Like aphids they produce a sugary secretion which is utilised by ants which may be found tending the hoppers.
4. Otolith; or earbone of a whale. The owner wanted to know why geologists place such emphasis on these structures. The otolith is very dense and is often the only portion of a whale skeleton to be preserved.
5. Boxing Beetle: "A beetle with boxing gloves on" is the description which has been given to this weevil, also known as the Elephant Beetle *Otorhinus cylindrirostris.* It does nefarious work in orchards and orange groves and occurs throughout Australia. Why the front feet are fantastically large no-one knows but they do give the impression of boxing gloves.

Leaf Hoppers tended by ants

Elephant beetle with "boxing gloves"

Birds of Sutton Grange October 2018

Nigel Harland

The Peregrine was definitely bird of the month. I have only seen one here before, you have to be in the right place at the right time! It was being harassed by a magpie and didn't stay long. The only one I have seen before was an injured bird which unfortunately died after being taken into care.

Pallid Cuckoo
Fan-tailed Cuckoo
Horsefield's Bronze-Cuckoo
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo
Superb Fairy-wren
Red-browed Finch
White-browed Scrubwren
Australian Magpie
Australian Raven
Laughing Kookaburra
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
European Goldfinch
Welcome Swallow

Spring is sprung
The grass is riz
I now know where
The cuckoos is!

Brown Falcon
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Long-billed Corella
Crimson Rosella
Eastern Rosella
Striated Pardalote
Spotted Pardalote
Grey Shrike-thrush
White-faced Heron
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Tree Martin
New Holland Honeyeater
Peregrine Falcon

Photo Observations

Joy Weatherill – Austn. Gannets at Pope's Eye, Port Philip Bay, 25/9/18

Making love;

claiming territory;

collecting seaweed for nest

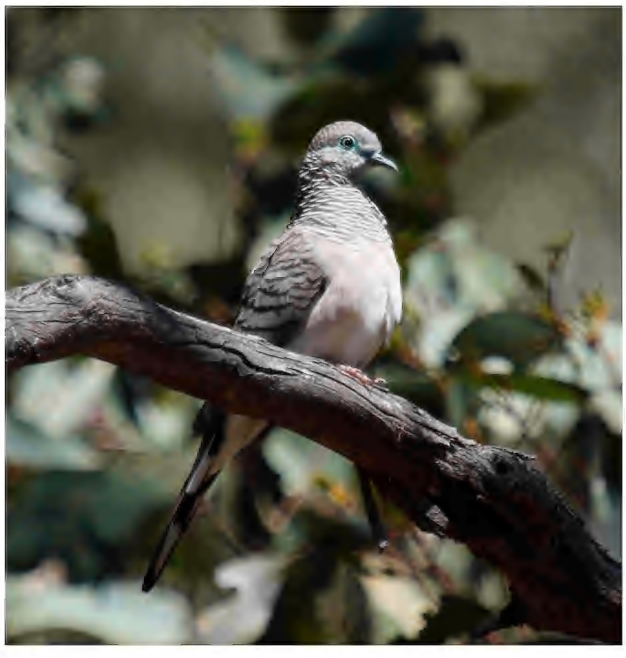
Barbara Browne (based in Melbourne)

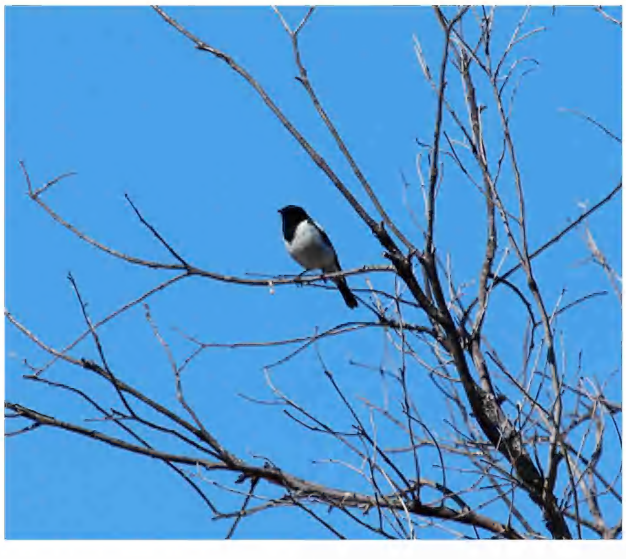
I thought I'd share this owl photo with you. The two owls are regular visitors to a nearby block of apartments. They spend a lot of their time perched on the pipe coming out of a first storey apartment, presumably it's a heating outlet. They've been there for quite some weeks.

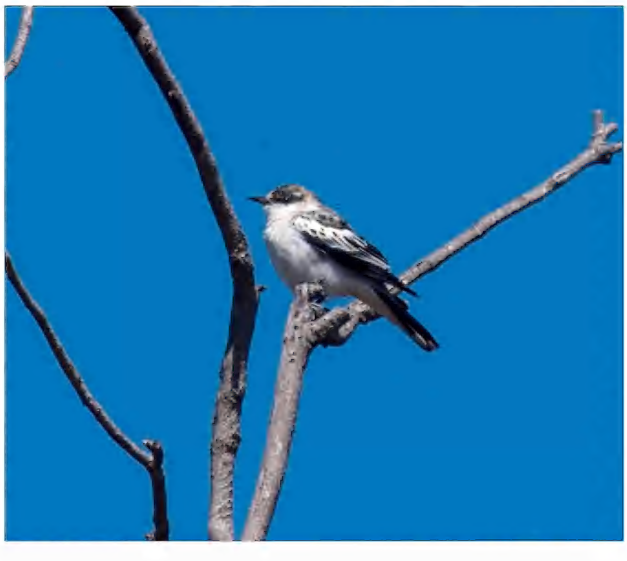
[They are Frogmouths of course, and seem to have given up on disguising themselves as tree branches in favour of a nice warm winter perch - Ed]

Claire Morgan sent us this great action shot of a Honeyeater challenging a Pallid Cuckoo in Muckleford. Perched Cuckoo at right.

Judy Hopley forwarded these shots taken on the October 6th Birdlife outing to the Rise and Shine: Yellow Robin, Peaceful Dove and Hooded Robin by **Ash Vigus**, and the juvenile White-winged Triller by **Euan Moore**.







Bird Quiz

Nigel harland

The bird featured in the August CN was the Spotted Pardalote. This bird was emerging from its nest which it generally hollows out from a mud or earth bank. It has a three note call, often repeated, compared to the Striated Pardalote's two notes. There is a species variation found in the Mallee region, which has a distinctive yellow rump.

The bird for this month is shown at right.

Wednesday Wildflower Wander 4

Richard Piesse

The last Wednesday wildflower walk for this year was held on October 3rd - White Gum Track south of the railway line. The bush was very dry, crunchy under foot. Trees were suffering from the drought conditions, but also from continuing attack from caterpillars. Few bulbs and Orchids were in flower, and mostly stunted in height. 19 species were listed. Probably a poor list of flowers for early October.

Club Excursion, Saturday 13th of October 2018

Richard Piesse

Plants flowering along Wewak track just east of Porcupine Ridge Road:

Lomandra filiformis	Wattle Mat-rush
L multiflora	Many-flowered Mat-rush
Lepidosperma semiteres	Wire Rapier-sedge
Luzula meridionalis	Common Wood-rush
Caladenia carnea	Pink Fingers
C cucullata	Hood Orchid
C moschata	Musky Hood
Glossodia major	Wax-lip Orchid
Thelymitra sp. (buds)	Sun-orchid
Poa sieberiana	Grey Tussock-grass
Microseris walteri	Yam Daisy
Senecio phelleus (buds)	Slender Groundsel
Xerochrysum viscosum	Sticky Everlasting
Drosera auriculata	Tall Sundew
D hookeri	Pale Sundew
Stackhousia monogyna	Creamy Candles
Tetratheca ciliata	Pink Bells
Epacris impressa	Common Heath
Leucopogon virgatus	Common Beard-heath
Acacia acinacea	Gold-dust Wattle
A aspera	Rough Wattle
A provincialis	Wirilda Wattle
Daviesia leptophylla	Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea
Dillwynia phylicoides	Small-leaf Parrot-pea
Pultenaea pedunculata	Matted Bush-pea
Goodenia blackiana	Black's Goodenia
Leptospermum myrsinoides	Heath Tea-tree
Rhytidosporum procumbens	White Marianth
Grevillea alpina	Downy Grevillea
G obtecta	Fryerstown Greville
Correa reflexa	Common Correa
Philotheca verrucosa	Fairy Wax-flower
Pimelea linifolia	Slender Rice-flower

Black's Goodenia (top) and Matted Bush-pea. Photos by Judy Hopley

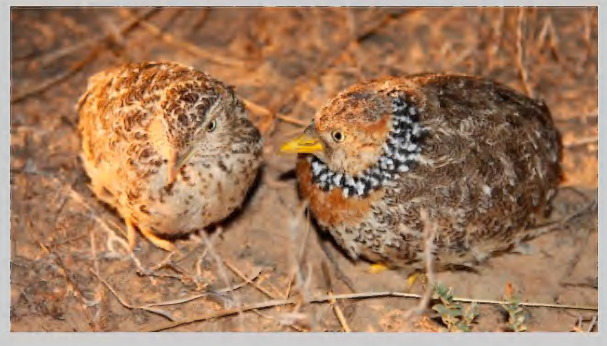
The trees and plants were generally looking much healthier than at White-gum track, even though the bush was still dry – maybe there has been more rain along Porcupine Ridge than closer to Castlemaine. A reasonable list of plants in flower for mid October.

Our speakers for the November meeting will be Kirsten Hutchinson and Deanna Marshall

'Plains for the Wanderer'

Plains-wanderers are nationally critically endangered. They share a physical resemblance to quail, but in evolutionary terms, they are one of a kind – there's no bird like it in the world. In Victoria, 95% of native grasslands that Plains-wanderers formerly occupied have been lost to cultivation and urban development. The protection and maintenance of the habitat of the Plains-wanderer is vital for the conservation of the species, but will this be enough?

Deanna Marshall is Trust for Nature's North West Area Manager. For the past 7 years both her and her team of 5 have overseen the delivery of Trust for Nature programs and projects in the North Central and Mallee CMA regions. Prior to this, Deanna worked in the Biodiversity Group for the state government in the Loddon Mallee Region for 11 years.



SEANA Spring 2019

During September your committee started on the organisation of the SEANA gathering to be held in Castlemaine 4th-6th October 2019. To organise this event, the CFNC committee has established a sub-committee, which has started work. Suggestions for excursions (some of which will be to places visited in 1998, no doubt!) are welcomed, as are offers to lead excursions, and to assist in various ways during the weekend. Please note the dates in your 2019 diaries – attending SEANA is a great way to get to know (or renew) contacts with fellow naturalists across Victoria. More detailed information will be in the December CN.

Removal of Chilean Needlegrass from the Castlemaine Botanic Gardens

Last year some members assisted Margaret Panter in removing specimens of Chilean Needlegrass from an area in the CBG where this weed has been detected. Margaret will hold a working bee when the grasses are ripe enough to identify their seeds - see the article in the December 2017 issue of the *Castlemaine Naturalist.*

If you are able to assist in this important task, please phone Margaret on 5470 5072 (7am-7pm) or send her an email with your contact phone number (pantermargaret@yahoo.com.au) so she can contact you when the date for the working bee is known to see if you are available on that day.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Castlemaine Field Naturalists
Coming events

Fri Nov 9 meeting: Kirsten Hutchinson and Deanna Marshall (Trust for Nature) - Plains Wanderers

Sat Nov 10 field trip: Wildflowers Fryers Ridge? – Richard Piesse

Mon Nov 12 - Roadside cleanup. Organiser Geoff Harris
9 a.m. start at cnr. Golf Links road on Pyrenees Highway

Takes 1 – 2 hrs., Wear sturdy footwear and gloves. Garbage bags and reflective vests will be supplied. Please note KABC rules prohibit anyone under 16 from working on the roadside.

Sat and/or Sun 1 and 2 December; Annual Bird Count (see page 1)

Fri Dec 14 meeting: Members night

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB ACTIVITIES

General meetings - (second Friday of each month, except January) are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) Hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 7.30 pm.

Field Trips - (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the car park opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and/or afternoon tea. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.

Business meetings - third Thursday of each month, except December, at George Broadways; 24a Greenhill Ave., at 6.00 pm. Members are invited to attend.

Club website (Web master: Chris Timewell) - http://castlemainefnc.wordpress.com/

Subscriptions for 2018
Ordinary membership: Single $35, Family $50
Pensioner or student: Single $25, Family $30
Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

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